

Bar/Bat Mitzvah Programme for Children With Special Needs

The prevailing religious attitude in Israel towards children with special needs is that "they are neither typical nor equal participants in the Jewish community;" therefore they cannot take on the responsibilities of the mitzvot.

Our **Bar/Bat Mitzvah Programme for Children with Special Needs** is Israel's only nationwide effort to offer children with special needs an opportunity to celebrate their Bar or Bat Mitzvah and be included in mainstream Jewish society. The experience provides children and their families with a sense of pride, joy, and accomplishment at this Jewish crossroads.



Originally run in one school, today the programme works with up to 40 schools and institutions throughout Israel, educating almost 300 children each year. Since the programme's inception, more than 3,000 young Israelis and their families have celebrated this Jewish milestone in a way most never thought possible.

Programme

Using a systematic teaching approach, professionals educate the children over a four to six-month period, preparing them to be called up to the Torah and to enter Jewish adulthood. Teaching methods are modern, creative and experiential, expressing a loving and caring attitude while accounting for the children's differing capabilities.

Bnei Mitzvah celebrate as individuals or in a group ceremony, often at a Masorti synagogue, in the presence of family, teachers, school-friends and local congregants. On this special day, the children are honoured and given the centre stage of the traditional Jewish arena. Each ceremony is unique, with an almost indescribable awe-inspiring emotion as the children are called to the Torah.

Other Special Needs Programs

NOAM (the Masorti youth movement) provides for the ongoing participation of children with special needs in local and national activities. The Ramah-NOAM Summer Camp includes Camp Netaim, a camping experience for children with special needs, and the Maayan Vocational Program, an opportunity to mainstream adults with special needs as staff members.



Budget

The 2009 annual budget for the programme is CA\$200,000, representing a 20% decrease on 2008, due to the global economic crisis. Increasing this amount would enable us to reinstate the schools we have been forced to cut and even expand to more schools, as well as enlarge the scope of our work with parents and children.

“חנוך לנער על פי דרכו”

(משלי כ"ב, ו')